



## *Leadership Philosophy of LTC Andrew J. DeKever*



1. The purpose of this document is to outline for you my leadership philosophy. It is my hope that you will take from this a better understanding of how I approach my management of any organization so you know what you can expect from me as we work together towards achieving our goals in support of our higher headquarters' intent.

2. The first step of understanding my leadership philosophy is to know who I am. I am a career officer in the U.S. Army, but there are so many other things in my life that better define me than my uniform and my rank:

- o I am my wife's sweetheart, who still buys her flowers at least twice per month even though we've known each other for almost 11 years now;

- o I am my son's daddy, who can be found chasing him through the tunnels of the playground equipment at McDonald's;

- o I am a traveler who has seen the world and who loves living each moment to the fullest; and

- o The uniform won't hide my personality, and I don't want for it to hide yours either. I have a sense of humor, love to play practical jokes on my peers and subordinates, keep toys in my office, and strive to keep the mood as light-hearted as possible, except when we absolutely need to be serious.

3. The following should give you an idea of what is important to me when it comes to my responsibilities as OIC of any organization:

- o Who We Are: We are a disciplined, standards-based team committed to mission accomplishment, to standing by each other, and to truly living the Army Values.**

- o Own Your Lanes:** My practice is to look at every duty and task that falls under my mission statement and to ensure that it is delegated down to the subordinates under my supervision. There will be no doubt as to which member of the team is responsible for each of these tasks. My expectation is for you to own each of the tasks that fall in your respective lanes—take it, run with it, and come to me when you need guidance, resources, or assistance. As long as you show initiative and decisive leadership in the pursuit of your mission, I will forgive honest failure and will defend your actions to others. If there is an issue you need to present to me, please come with a solution in mind and how my rank and position can assist you in resolving it. In short, I will tell you what I want the end state to look like and will spell out your left and right limits, and will then entrust you with determining how we'll get there.

- o Honest, Yet Respectful, Feedback:** I'm intelligent, but I am far from being an expert with respect to the Profession of Arms. I'm also mature and disciplined as a person, but I am far from perfect nonetheless. So, I place the highest value on candid feedback from my team members. As long as you provide feedback to me in a respectful manner, you can say most anything that you want to me. If engaging me in public will be potentially embarrassing to either you or me, please do it behind closed doors. I will only respond defensively to your opinions if you do it in a disrespectful manner. You are my safety net, and so I am entrusting you to speak up if you see me or our team doing anything that could lead to disaster or mission failure. This includes everything ranging from the unit's direction, my orders, or if my behavior is failing to live up to this Leadership Philosophy and the Army Values.

o Mutual Respect: Related to my last point, being of a higher rank does not give me permission to treat you disrespectfully, and so if my behavior ever crosses a line in this regard, I will apologize to you.

o Leave No One Behind: **We are a family and we will take care of each other—this is non-negotiable with me.** Some of my most cherished friends are the relatives of a Soldier from my last BCT who committed suicide after we returned from Afghanistan because his chain-of-command did not help him recover from PTSD and TBI from his combat experiences. I am also close to the enlisted personnel and junior officers who I worked with in the mortuary affairs tent from that deployment. **We will stand by each other, and if you find that you need help of any sort—especially with challenges from combat deployments-- you will have my absolute and unconditional support.** My wife, who used to run a rape crisis and domestic violence shelter, is equally committed towards this end, and is willing to advise people on how to navigate the system towards getting help. “Mission Accomplishment” is hollow if we fail to take care of each other, both downrange and in garrison.

o Lead By Example: **I will never ask you to do something I am not prepared to do myself, and I will demonstrate this to you through my actions as opposed to just with my words. I expect the same from all leaders under my supervision.** This may seem like “Leadership 101,” but you’d be surprised at how easy it is for an entire organization to forget this. This creed especially applies if any of us will be in harm’s way or will be exposed to battlefield death or anything else that is dangerous or distressing.

o Forgiving Honest Mistakes: There is a difference between mistakes and honest failure, versus stupidity and negligence. I am tolerant of forgiving people who are guilty of the former, provided that you own up to it and learn from it. I have zero tolerance for the latter, however.

o Balance: I enjoy my family’s company and am assuming that all of you similarly cherish your lives away from the flagpole. I’m not the sort of leader who will fill your off-duty hours with endless social events, and any social events we do have will be family-friendly. I’m not a workaholic, and I want for us to work together so none of us have to be workaholics to get the job done. I especially never want for any of you to feel like, under my leadership, that the Army has to be your entire life. I appreciate this sort of balance and will do all I can to ensure that we all can enjoy it. After my experiences with mortuary affairs from my last deployment, I have a renewed love for living life to the fullest and for maintaining this sort of balance.

o My Wife: Mary is approachable, easy-going, prefers to be called by her first name, and absolutely does not wear my rank! She loves our family, our pets, good coffee, and has been known to bake and cook wonderful goodies for the team. ☺ She treats everyone the same (regardless of rank).

In closing, my attitude towards Soldiers can best be summarized by General of the Army Eisenhower’s remarks in 1947 when he said, **“I cannot let this day pass without telling the fighting men that my fondest boast shall always be that I was their fellow Soldier.”** I love Soldiers and the values we espouse as Soldiers, most especially valor, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. I look forward to the journey we are about to embark on together, and value your service to the Nation, the Army, and our unit.



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